

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 SAM-01 SAJ-01

EB-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /135 W

----- 104380

O R 201728Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9279

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C/AMEMBASSY LONDON 8008

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 12193

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAS 1 AND 2: 26 MILLION VOTES
VICE 27 MILLION)

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: FROM GAULLISM
TO GISCARDISM

REF: A) PARIS 10827; B) PARIS 11938

1. SUMMARY. IN CLOSEST ELECTION IN ITS MODERN HISTORY, FRANCE HAS CHOSEN GISCARD D'ESTAING TO BE THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC AND THUS AVOIDS A POSSIBLE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS. WITH RECORD NEARLY 88 PERCENT PARTICIPATING, ELECTORATE OPTED FOR GISCARD BY LESS THAN 400,000 VOTES OUT OF MORE THAN 26 MILLION CAST. AFTER FORMING HIS GOVERNMENT EARLY NEXT WEEK, GISCARD'S FIRST TASK WILL BE TO INTRODUCE SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MEASURES DESIGNED TO SATISFY AT LEAST MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS OF 49 PERCENT OF FRENCH WHO BACKED MITTERRAND. WE DO NOT FORESEE SERIOUS LABOR UNREST OR BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL ORDER IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE, ALTHOUGH TRADE UNION PRESSURE WILL COME IF GISCARD DOES NOT MOVE RAPIDLY TO IMPLEMENT MEANINGFUL SOCIAL REFORM MEASURES. NEITHER DO WE EXPECT IMMEDIATE BASIC CHANGE IN FRENCH FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY, ALTHOUGH GISCARD'S TONE AND STYLE SHOULD BE LESS ABRASIVE THAN DURING LAST MONTHS OF POMPIDOU REGIME. END SUMMARY

2. WITH OVERSEAS VOTE COUNT STILL INCOMPLETE, VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING HAS BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT WITH ABOUT 50.7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, A MARGIN OF LESS THAN 400,000 VOTES OVER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND OUT OF MORE THAN 26 MILLION VOTES CAST. A KEY FACTOR IN HIS VICTORY WAS THE RECORD TURNOUT OF NEARLY 88 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS, EXCEEDING THE PREVIOUS RECORD OF 85.02 PERCENT IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 1965 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT SOME 37 PERCENT OF THOSE WHO FAILED TO VOTE ON THE MAY 5 FIRST ROUND PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND ROUND, WITH TWO THIRDS OF THEM VOTING FOR GISCARD AND ONE THIRD FOR MITTERRAND. GISCARD ALSO PICKED UP ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF CHABAN'S FIRST ROUND VOTE, WITH THE REMAINDER SPLIT ABOUT EQUALLY BETWEEN MITTERRAND AND ABSTENTIONS. GISCARD RAN STRONGER WITH THE WOMEN, ELDERLY, EXECUTIVES
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AND FARMERS, WHILE MITTERRAND HAD A MAJORITY OF MALE, YOUTH AND WORKERS VOTES. FRANCE'S NORTH, SOUTHWEST AND SOUTHEAST WENT FOR MITTERRAND, WITH GISCARD TAKING THE OTHER MAJOR AREAS, INCLUDING MOST OF THE CITIES (HE POLLED NEARLY 57 PERCENT IN PARIS AND TOOK THE NORMALLY SOCIALIST STRONGHOLD OF LILLE).

3. IN HIS VICTORY STATEMENT GISCARD MADE A BOW IN

MITTERRAND'S DIRECTION, SAYING THAT MITTERRAND HAS A
ROLE TO PLAY IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF FRENCH
POLITICS. GISCARD STRESSED THE ELECTORATE'S DESIRE
FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE, AND
PROMISED "YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

4. MITTERRAND MADE A CREDIBLE DRIVE FOR THE PRESIDENCY
WHICH BARELY FELL SHORT. IT IS ARGUABLE WHETHER AN
EARLIER CHANGE TO MORE AGGRESSIVE TACTICS OF ATTACKING
GISCARD WOULD HAVE MADE THE DIFFERENCE. THE
COMMUNIST BACKING THAT BROUGHT HIM SO CLOSE TO VICTORY
ALSO WORKED IN THE END TO DENY HIM THE NARROW ADDITIONAL
MARGIN HE NEEDED TO WIN. ALTHOUGH HE TRIED HARD, HE
COULD NOT ENTIRELY OVERCOME MIDDLE CLASS FEARS AND
SUSPICIONS OF EVENTUAL COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN A
MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT. THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A
MAJORITY IN FRANCE FOR MITTERRAND, BUT NOT FOR THE

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EB-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /135 W

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O R 201728Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9280

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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"UNITED" LEFT.

5. THE LEFT COMES OUT OF THE ELECTION WITH ITS
GEOGRAPHICAL BASIS ENLARGED, HAVING MADE BREAKTHROUGHS
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IN NEW AREAS. WHILE THEY DID NOT WIN, THEY CAN BE
PLEASED WITH HOW WELL THEY DID. WE EXPECT THAT THE
LEFT WILL ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE VOTERS AND WILL
TAKE UP ITS ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION, LOOKING
AHEAD TO THE NEXT MAJOR ELECTORAL TEST IN 1978 WHEN
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED.

6. WE EXPECT GISCARD WILL MOVE DECISIVELY TO TAKE
CHARGE. BUT WITH ONLY 50.7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AND
GIVEN THE NECESSITY OF RELYING ON GAULLIST SUPPORT FOR
HIS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, THE NARROWNESS OF HIS
VICTORY WILL IMPOSE RESTRAINTS ON HIS NEW GOVERNMENT
WHICH COULD MAKE SOLUTIONS TO SOME PROBLEMS MORE
DIFFICULT. HE WILL WANT TO PUT HIS PERSONAL STAMP ON
HIS NEW TEAM AND TAKE ACCOUNT OF PUBLIC DESIRES FOR
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES, BUT WITHOUT ANY FUNDAMENTAL
CHANGE IN THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM ITSELF. HE WILL QUICKLY
HAVE TO MAKE CLEAR HOW HE PROPOSES TO DAMPEN THE
INFLATIONARY PRESSURES WHICH HAVE WEAKENED FRANCE.
DURING THE CAMPAIGN HE HAS APPEARED TO GRASP THE DEPTH
AND URGENCY OF FRENCH DESIRE FOR SOME SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC CHANGE.

7. GISCARD'S HONEYMOON PERIOD COULD BE VERY SHORT. FOR
THE MOMENT, TRADE UNIONS WILL PROBABLY NOT ROCK THE
BOAT, AND WE DO NOT FORESEE SERIOUS LABOR UNREST OR
BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL ORDER IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.
MAJOR SOCIAL AGITATION COULD COME IN THE FALL, WITH
TIMING AND EXTENT DEPENDING UPON ECONOMIC CONDITIONS,

THE DEGREE OF INFLATION, AND GISCARD'S MEASURES TO DELIVER ON HIS CAMPAIGN PROMISES. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT PRESSURES ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT FROM TRADE UNIONS, TOGETHER WITH CONTINUING INFLATION AND A MILD RECESSION, COULD RESULT IN SOME EARLY AGITATION. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE TIMING AND SUCCESS OF GISCARD'S SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC MEASURES, BUT ALSO ON HIS ABILITY TO ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR REASONABLY COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE UNIONS. ANY EVIDENCE OF A DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE NAME OF THE "MARKET ECONOMY" WILL CERTAINLY DIVIDE FRANCE INTO TWO HOSTILE CAMPS ALONG CLASS LINES.

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8. IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AREA, MORE WILL BE KNOWN ABOUT GISCARD'S PLANS AFTER HE NAMES HIS FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT. WE EXPECT HE WILL CONTINUE THE FIFTH REPUBLIC TRADITION AND KEEP FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY REINS FIRMLY IN HIS OWN HANDS. IN ANY CASE WE DO NOT EXPECT IMMEDIATE MAJOR INNOVATIONS. GISCARD WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE FRANCE'S NATIONAL OBJECTIVES, THROUGH FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY, ALONG THE COURSE SET BY POMPIDOU. WHILE GISCARD WILL ATTACH JUST AS MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THE DEFENSE OF FRANCE'S NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AS THE GAULLISTS DID, WE EXPECT HE WILL CONDUCT HIS EXTERNAL POLICIES WITH A LESS ABRASIVE TONE AND STYLE.

9. IN THE LONGER TERM, IF GISCARD BRINGS INTO HIS GOVERNMENT MODERATES WHO FAVOR A MORE OUTWARD-LOOKING EUROPE, SOME GRADUAL CHANGES OF BENEFIT TO THE UNITED STATES MIGHT BE REGISTERED. BUT WE SHOULD NOT BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC. ALL OUR PROBLEMS WITH FRANCE ARE NOT SIMPLY THE RESULT OF GAULLIST STYLE, AND IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN NEW PERSONALITIES ON THE FRENCH SIDE TO OVERCOME THEM.

10. FRENCH MEDIA MORNING OF MAY 20 PLAYED UP THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT NIXON TELEPHONED GISCARD PERSONALLY TO EXTEND CONGRATULATIONS, AND WAS THE FIRST LEADER OF A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT TO DO SO.

11. INAUGURATION SCENARIO. CONSTITUTION GIVES THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL UP TO TEN DAYS (MAY 29 AT MIDNIGHT) TO VERIFY AND OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE ELECTION RESULTS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THIS CAN BE DONE BY FRIDAY, MAY 24. GISCARD HAS INDICATED HE WILL FORMALLY TAKE OFFICE ON MONDAY, MAY 27. POHER CONTINUES TO FUNCTION AS INTERIM PRESIDENT UNTIL GISCARD IS

INAUGURATED. AS SOON AS GISCARD IS INSTALLED, PRIME
MINISTER MESSMER WILL SUBMIT THE RESIGNATION OF THE
PRESENT GOVERNMENT THE SAME DAY. THE NEW PRESIDENT HAS

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ACTION EUR-25

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O R 201728Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9281

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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SAID HE WILL ALSO APPOINT HIS PRIME MINISTER ON MAY 27.
THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE ANNOUNCED
SHORTLY THEREAFTER, AND THE FIRST COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE MAY 29. (WHILE THERE ARE MANY
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RUMORS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING ON IDENTITY OF THE NEW
PRIME MINISTER, GISCARD HAS SAID ONLY THAT HIS CHOICE
WILL BE A MAJOR SURPRISE TO POLITICAL OBSERVERS,
STRESSING THAT HIS CABINET WILL REFLECT CHANGE AND
YOUTH.)

12. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED, PARLIAMENT
WILL THEN RESUME ITS REGULAR SPRING SESSION AND THE
NEW PRIME MINISTER WILL PROBABLY ADDRESS THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY WITH A GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT. UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION THIS DECLARATION DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE
SUBJECT OF A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. DURING THE CAMPAIGN,
HOWEVER, GISCARD IMPLIED THAT IN RECOGNITION OF
PARLIAMENT'S ROLE HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SUBMIT HIS
GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT TO A CONFIDENCE VOTE.
REAL DEBATE ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM WILL
PROBABLY NOT START UNTIL AFTER PARLIAMENT RECONVENES
NEXT FALL.
IRWIN

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